

VZCZCXRO2196  
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH  
DE RUEHKL #0600/01 2020821  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 210821Z JUL 09  
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3001  
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KUALA LUMPUR 000600

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

FOR EAP/MTS, INL/G-TIP, BANGKOK PLEASE PASS TO SECRETARY  
AND PDAS MARCIEL IN PHUKET

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KTIP](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [MY](#)  
SUBJECT: TIP: FIRST ARREST OF IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS

REF: KL 596 - INCREASED GOM RESPONSIVENESS ON TIP

Summary and Press Guidance  
-----

¶1. (SBU) Police have announced the arrest of five immigration officials under Malaysia's Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act for alleged involvement in a TIP syndicate. As the first GOM acknowledgement of official involvement in TIP, this is a significant step forward in Malaysia's newfound activism in combating trafficking. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Suggested Press Guidance:

Q: Any comment on the report that Malaysian authorities have arrested immigration officials suspected of involvement in trafficking of Burmese refugees? Is this the result of U.S. pressure and Tier 3 ranking in the U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report?

A: --- I welcome this news of Malaysia's arrest of immigration officers suspected of involvement in trafficking. We are making excellent progress together in the short time since Prime Minister Najib took office on April 2.

--- The Malaysians have made it very clear that they wish to partner with the U.S. and others in the region and globally to resolve trafficking issues. I commend my colleague, Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah, for his forthright support of an activist approach to this issue at the Non Aligned Movement summit in Egypt.

--Our Senate Foreign Relations Committee ranking minority member Senator Richard Lugar has been instrumental in bringing to light allegations of abuse of Burmese refugees in Malaysia. We owe Senator Lugar and his staff a debt of gratitude, along with dedicated NGOs and parliamentarians who have been working hard to shed light on traffickers, enslavement of innocent victims.

¶3. (SBU) At a July 20 press conference, Police Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Director Mohd Bakri Zinin announced the arrest of five Malaysian Immigration Department officials and four others for alleged involvement in a trafficking in persons syndicate. Our NGO contacts, who have been in close touch with the police regarding this case, have confirmed that these arrests have taken place. As indicated in reftel, this case was closely supervised by the Attorney General's Chambers and Head Prosecutor Tun Majid, apparently with little or no coordination with the Ministry of Home Affairs which oversees Immigration. Immigration Department Director General Abdul Rahman Othman told the press on July 20 that he was unaware of the arrests.

¶4. (SBU) Bakri said the immigration officials and four others (drivers who ferried the immigrants around the country) were believed to have received payments from a

syndicate for the 'sale' of a group of people, comprising mostly Burmese Rohingya migrants, as forced labor in various sectors including the fisheries industry. The CID Director pointed out that the officers acted as middlemen and protectors for the human-trafficking syndicate which recruited the migrants.

15. (SBU) Bakri's description of the modus operandi of the syndicate was similar to that described in the Senate report.

He stated that the senior Immigration officers would wait at several northern and southern border landing points to bring in the Rohingya migrants, who were charged between US\$85 (RM300) and US\$170 (RM600) each. The drivers used small deserted roads to transport them to various parts of the country for work. If they were unable to pay, they would be sold by the syndicate to, among others, owners of fishing industries in Thailand, where they would have to work until their debts were paid off.

16. (SBU) Bakri stated that the immigration officers received payment into their accounts locally and abroad. On some occasions, middlemen helped to broker the deals. The CID Director also stated that the police are investigating how many people have been trafficked and whether the immigration officers were also involved in forging documents and other illegal activities. He claimed that nine suspects were believed to have worked closely with the syndicate which had been active since last year, adding that the police were in the midst of tracking down syndicate members and their accomplices. The suspects have been remanded until July 24, and would be investigated under Section 13 of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act 2007 which carries an

KUALA LUMP 00000600 002 OF 002

imprisonment for a term which may extend to 20 years and a fine, if convicted.

17. (SBU) This is the first official GOM acknowledgement of the involvement of immigration officials in a human trafficking syndicate since the release of a U.S. Senate Foreign Relation Committee report on April 3, which detailed such allegations. According to Bakri, police had been monitoring the activities of the suspects since March (a month before the Senate report).

KEITH